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ABSTRACT

Community integrational groups, called family clusters, have emerged to meet the needs for connectedness of both individuals and families. To examine the effectiveness of the family cluster two groups were assessed. Cluster I, comprised of single-parent and nuclear families, and grandparents, met 2-3 hours per week for 12 weeks. Cluster II, made up of incomplete nuclear families, single-parent families, and grandparents, met for 2 hours each day for 1 week. Group activities were designed to promote intergenerational relationships, sources of role identification, and a climate of trust to enhance family functioning and acceptance of a variety of family units. Self-reports of participants and participant-observer ratings indicated high satisfaction, and changes in the family unit representing enhanced family interaction. These changes were still evident at a 9-month follow-up. The findings indicate that the cluster experience can promote successful intergenerational and family interaction. (MCF)

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THE FAMILY CLUSTER EXPERIENCE: AN EMPIRICAL EVALUATION

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ABSTRACT

Post-evaluations of two independent family clusters were made by the participants. In Cluster I, a pre-test. post-test, and follow-up design assessed expectations and perceived outcomes. Significant changes were found in all ages: to be accepted by a group and feel as a unique individual; to make friends easier; and to perceive that a change had been made in their own family system even nine months after the clustering experience. Cluster II had only a post-test evaluation and reported similar means on individual acceptance, increased ease in establishing interpersonal relationships, and constructive and postive changes in his/her own family system, due in part to clustering. Males in midlife had the highest ranking for valuing their families. Children, ages 4 to 16 years and single-parent family units expressed the highest level of satisfaction in clustering.

The implication of these findings suggest that youth found meaningful and important interpersonal relationships to therapeutically counter the "generation gap" in youth-adult interactions; and adult males and single-parent families can meet their specific needs with a unique type of social group -- family clusters.

THE FAMILY CLUSTER EXPERIENCE: AN EMPIRICAL EVALUATION

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INTRODUCTION

Frustrated longing for connectedness in community has been a predicament of society in the United States. This restlessness gave impetus to various dimensions in the development of social structures: authentic and nurturant living, ideal relationships, the essential uniqueness of self, development of self-potential, and the search for "being" (Gibbs, 1968; Otto, 1978; Rose, 1977; Rosenthal, 1978; Sawin, 1979; Smith, 1978). Social groups were formulated to simulate a community and to assuage the longings for ideal relationships and self-actualization. Such groups focused upon the present event, the minute analysis of interpersonal interactions at the moment, and the here-and-now expression of self in terms of body, emotions, and values (Rosenthal, 1978). The primary emphasis was the struggle for individualistic self-hood and personal hedonistic satisfaction to the exclusion of interdependent commitments even in the membership of encounter groups or T- or sensitivity groups, and variations of support groups (Smith, 1978). Though hedonic efforts offered some satisfaction, the longing for rootedness in community still persisted. More acutely in the struggle, societal groups

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made sparse corrections from the present moment to the world of everyday living.

The implication of the self-centered focus and moment-to-moment context in societal structures is that the reality and relevance of ongoing interpersonal interactions are neglected. It is posited that when the individual is placed in concurrent social interactions of family, school, work and leisure that relationships will be perceived to have beneficial meaning, challenge, authenticity, and utility in new situations. Interactions can then be evaluated as pragmatically rewarding and satisfying or unsatisfactory.

A variety of groups have sprung up in the past decade to transmit instrumental and psychological values in meaningful and supportive relationships (Hill, 1968; Kemplar, 1976; Otto, 1978). However, very few social structures are organized to include the whole family as participants (Pringle, 1974; Sawin, 1977). Separation by age and peer groups has served to alienate and to build interpersonal barriers which results in estrangement, separatism, and loneliness. A critical question would seem to be: How can a social group(s) be arranged to benefit self and family members within the community and world in which we live? This paper reports on one type of social group which emerged in the early Seventies.

Community intergenerational groups sometimes called family clusters have evolved to meet the convergent needs of individuals and the family. Family clusters facilitated cohesiveness and connectedness (Litwak, 1968; Sawin, 1970; Stoller, 1970; Unitarian Booklet, 1974) from an enrichment and growth model. Such groups have served as a support communities across the U.S., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (Sawin, 1977), in urbanized megatropolis

(Pringle, 1974) and as a therapeutic group for emotionally and physically handicapped children and their families (Kempler, 1976).

The family cluster model of this paper is described by Sawin (1977, 1979) with a collaborative style of leadership. The quasi-kinship network was intentionally and voluntarily formed from unrelated family units. In contrast to commune living, the participating family units retained their identity and autonomy and lived in separate homes. Each cluster had 25 or more people, represented several generations, contained 4 to 8 family units, shared an ecumenical religious perspective for the structured activities and had contracted before the cluster began. Two nonrelated groups were assessed: Cluster I met two to three hours once a week for twelve weeks and Cluster II met once a week for two hours across a week. Single persons, single-parents, nuclear families, and grandparents constituted the two clusters.

Each individual and family was asked to share in a reciprocal manner the joys, sorrows, and meaningful experiences in their lives. To facilitate a trust-building climate, an experimental learning format was provided by the cluster leaders. Themes and structured activities were employed to encourage interactions among all ages (connecting), to develop competencies in self and within the family system (learning), to practice new interpersonal skills (behavior rehearsing), and to engage in a holistic development on dimensions of feeling, thinking, and acting.

The focus of this paper is to empirically examine the self-report of participants and the participant-observer ratings of benefits derived from clustering. Prior to clustering, expectations of the participants of Cluster I [illegible]he anticipated needs which might be met in a family cluster were

obtained by questionnaire. Members of Clusters I and II evaluated the perceived rewards and the influence of interpersonal interactions for self and family by the use of questionnaires.

METHODOLOGY

Cluster I had a pretest- posttest-followup design. Cluster II had a posttest design since participants came from a diverse geographic area and many chose clustering just a few hours before the first session began. These factors precluded pretest and following-up evaluation. In Cluster I, members responded to the questionnaire in the final cluster session or within one month's time and another evaluation was made nine months later. Respondents in Cluster II completed the evaluation in the final session of the cluster. Co-leaders (as participant observers) made evaluative judgments and ratings of member participation in interactional dynamics and interpersonal process inherent in the clustering.

Composition of Clusters I and II.

In Cluster I, people knew each other before joining the cluster. Single, nuclear families, and grandparents comprised the sample. Participants were associated with a Protestant church and lived in one county of a midwestern state. The decision to join a cluster evolved from informal talks with people who had previously experienced a family cluster and from informational talks given by the coordinator of the cluster. Encouragement for the novel clustering concept was given by the minister of the church and his family were participants in Cluster I. One nuclear family of three members dropped out of the cluster after two sessions. Other commonalities

shared by the members included being white, and middle-class socioeconomic status.

This cluster met once a week for two to three hours in a twelve week interval. After one family decided not to continue in clustering, near perfect attendance of the remaining cluster members was noted. Settings for the sessions were varied and chosen by consensual agreement by the members and included homes, parks, and church parlors. Structured activities employed themes appropriate for the setting. For example, the dedication of a new home of one family was the theme for one cluster session. This cluster welcomed visitors and new members throughout the clustering interval.

Cluster II had incomplete nuclear families for the most part, and single, single-parent families and grandparents were represented (N=40). All family units continued in this cluster. Participants selected family clustering as an activity from several possibilities in a midwestern regional ecumenical church school. Cluster II population represented 9.3% of the ecumenical group. Members were white, in mid-socioeconomic status as judged by North-Hyatt occupational ranking, were Protestant or Catholic, and came from five midwestern states. Most people did not know one another before joining the cluster. Few had prior experience in clustering activities (20%). No visitors or new members were accepted after the first session in contrast to Cluster I.

The meeting area for participants of Cluster II was consistently a large recreational room. Five daily sessions which lasted for two hours constituted the experience. A high level of commitment to this event was interpreted as almost perfect attendance of the members was registered

throughout the week despite the opportunity to attend approximately twenty other activities at the same time.

The decision to join this cluster was made on information in a brochure which advertised family clustering as an activity in which the whole family could participate or from postive and appealing recommendations who had previous experiences with family clustering.

Content of Clusters I and II.

The experiential activities had Judeo-Christian orientation and were planned to integrate consistent themes, values, and interpersonal messages. Activities were selected from following sources (Gilbert and Rugh, 1975; Coleman and Miller, 1975; Pfieffer and Jones, 1976; Satir, 1972; Sawin, 1971). The primary goals of clustering were to build relationships within the intergenerational community, to provide sources of role identification, to develop a group structure by norm setting, to establish a trust climate so that self-disclosure might be facilitated to enrich relationships, to enhance family system functioning in the cluster and in everyday living, and to furnish an atmosphere conducive to the emotional acceptance of self, others, and a variety of family units.

Participants in Cluster I interacted in a number of arrangements -- individual, dyad, triad, simulated family units, one's own family unit, and the group as a whole. Cluster II had a large number of participants which limited the subgroupings to primarily either one's own family unit or into simulated family units. Unrelated individuals were added to the incomplete nuclear family to form the simulated family unit within this cluster.

Leadership was shared by two co-leaders with the senior author being common to both clusters. Activities were planned by the co-leaders from the

interpreted reactions of the participants in the previous session. Such planning of future sessions is referred to as the emergent design with the collaborative style of leadership (Sawin, 1980) which dealt with perceived and expressed needs of the members. In addition, the facilitation of the group process is promoted by attending to evolving interpersonal behaviors. As example, a favorable reaction of members to low-level risk-taking disclosing activity, (e.g., a member responding to "what are talents I have" and "how can I share them with the group") might permit a succeeding activity in the next session with increasing self-disclosure, such as "what are bad habits I want to change as I interact with others."

RESULTS

Descriptive Compostion of Cluster I and II.

Mean age (X=35, 34) and age distributions (range= 7 to 59, 1 to 58) were markedly similar for Clusters I and II respectively. Youth under 16 years comprised 16% and 20% of the respective clusters. The family units were categorized on the basis of the age of the adults. Young family units had adults 18 to 24 years of age, middle family units had adults 25 to 35, and older family units had adults over 35. The distribution in Cluster I was 20%, 15%, and 52% and in Cluster II was 8%, 28%, and 64%. Both clusters were heavily represented by those over 35 and parents of a family unit.

Females predominated in the clusters (3 to 2 and 3 to 1, respectively). The marital status varied: single women (including children) represented 24% and 36%; married adults without children comprised 20% and 5%; marrieds with children comprised 24% and 75% of Cluster I and II, respectively. The

identified grandparents constituted a group of 32% and 14% within the respective clusters.

The occupation of the respondent was classified on a three point scale on the basis of the estimated time a person dealt with things or with people in the performance of their work. The majority of respondents in both Clusters had a things orientation in their job (48%, 47%). Cluster I had somewhat equal split between people orientation and a combination of things and people orientation (29%, 24%, respectively), in contrast to, Cluster II which had a combination of people-things job interation of 14% and people-orientation to job of 39% of the population in Cluster II.

The mean education of the respondents in both clusters was slightly more than high school training. Respondents with less than 12 years of school accounted for 20% and 22% of Cluster I and II respectively; those completing 12 years of school 28% and 31%; those having 13 to 16 years 40% and 20%; and members having more than 16 years 12% and 23%.

Expectations for a Family Cluster

On the Likert sale which spanned 1 to 18 points was anchored by labels as "peak experience," "enthusiastic," "neutral," and "waste of time." Each Cluster I participant responded to a pretest questionnaire containing the following questions: How do you perceive your interaction with your own family members? Do you like your family? Do you feel listened to and accepted by others? How easily do you make friends? Do you think you will enjoy a Family Cluster? Differential needs and expectations on the partitions of age, sex, type of family unit, and age of family unit were predicted. A significant difference in the rank order of means (eta= .69, $P < .001$) from highest to lowest was demonstrated in the non-parametric

comparison. The rank order was middle-aged adults, females, older adults, married family units,and males. Family clustering as a means to fulfill personal need had the greater positive response from middle-aged adults but least positive expectations were registered from males. Males were significantly less confident in making new friends (eta= .76, $P < .01$) and at least two men verbally indicated compliance to spousal influence as a reason to participate in the novel clustering experience.

In pre-clustering assessment, males, middle and older adults ranked family life more satisfactory in decreasing rank order. Married family units were more satisfied with family interactions. Young adults were primarily single and had less contact and rated presumably less satisfaction with infrequent family of origin relationships.

An open-ended question of what the respondent expects to happen in clustering generated two categories: to have increased fellowship, sharing and trust in interperson relationships that were anticipated to develop throughout the course of the clustering (36%) and to name an activity that an individual wanted to include in cluster happenings (36%) e.g., play volleyball. This latter category was the response primarily of youth whereas interpersonal relationship development was anticipated by adults. Unexpectedly, a low frequency (16%) of members listed the expectation of making intergenerational friends -- an aspect of family clustering that was highly promoted. The predominant expectation was the perceived togetherness and sense of community within the cluster (52%).

The perception of interpersonal communication skills and the efficacy outside the family had a relating of less than optimal feeling of adequacy as 70% indicated a neutral to "some difficulty" response as to how well the

person dealt with others. Supporting this perception was the subsequent response of 60% of those repsondents felt that they were not listened to by significant others, particularly in their family. Five respondents (20%) felt that they could make friends easily outside the family although two persons indicated that they were not listened to by family members. No differences in the interpersonal effectiveness was found by sex, type of family unit, or age of family unit. The predominant dissatisfaction in "not being listened to" was in youth and older adult categories. Most of the satisfaction in making friends was the middle-adult category.

Rewards of Participaing in a Family Cluster.

The assessment of reward for family outcome was tested by two Likert scales: "What was your impression of your cluster experience?" "Would you participate in another cluster?"

Respondents of Cluster I and II indicated an "enthusiastic" level of acceptance of the cluster experience ($\bar{X}$ = 12.8 $\pm$ 2.9; 12.9 $\pm$ 2.8). Although 84% and 83% of members had not been in a cluster previously, after the clustering 76% and 81% indicated that they would join a future cluster -- a significant change in the intention of participation ($P < .05$). No one indicated that they would not join a future cluster. Those undecided in a future cluster participation represented 24% and 19% of the samples, respectively.

Single-parent family units were represented only in Cluster II and had higher global ratings for the cluster experience ($\bar{X}$ = 15.2, n = 5). Of the eight nuclear family units, five families had common agreement in their combined "impression" of clustering. Three family units had substantial discrepancy in rating scores. For all eight family units, the

youth had the highest scores. The means of satisfaction of youth were 13.9 and 15.2 for Cluster I and II, respectively. The latter value was significantly different from the Cluster II (group) ($P < .05$ Tukey s honest signifcant difference -- HSDT).

Respondents perceived a positive change in their family ($\bar{X}$ = 11.7 $\pm$ 3.6; 12.5 $\pm$ 3.4) for Clusters I and II respectively. The change in the family was in the medium range of the Likert scale. No signficant difference between the groups was obtained.

Benefits which members perceived and then listed in an open-ended question included the following: "enriching my life"; "growing in my potential"; "improved communications within my family"; "improved intergrational communication which added insight and perception to the world"; "more awareness and acceptance of children from adults"; "the togetherness of community shared in fellowship"; "team building as a group"; and "more comfortable self-disclosure".

In addition to the global response of "liking the cluster", the perception of "being accepted and understood by others", "the ease of making friends", what was "most liked", and what was "most valued" were assessed. In the initial pretest of Cluster I, the response of "whether I'm listened to and understood" had a mean of 9.0 $\pm$ 3.2 before clustering and 13.4 $\pm$ 3.7 after the cluster experience which was a signficant change ($P < .01$, Tukey's HSDT). Cluster II had an outcome mean of 14.3 $\pm$ 3.4 and no pretest expectation was available. The variable of "being understood" was the highest rated variable of all Likert scales. No statistical differences were obtained

on the basis of age, sex, age of family unit, family units by marital status for Cluster I and II.

A companion question to assess interpersonal communication skills was "ease of making friends." On the pre-cluster inventory, respondents of Cluster I had a mean of 8.0 ± 3.2 or less than average skill. After clustering, the ease of making friends was rated $15.8 \pm .08$, a significant difference ($P < .01$, Tukey's HSDT). Cluster II had almost an identical outcome mean of 15.9 ± 1.0.

In an open-ended response of what was "most valued", the acceptance and affirmation the individual was most first choice for 21% and 33% of the participants in Cluster I and II, respectively. The "most liked" aspect of the cluster was individual acceptance (28% and 27% for Cluster I and II, respectively. Responses were arbitararily categorized into four dimensions: the acceptance of the individual in the group; the building of a cluster community with beneficial interpersonal relationships; the fostering of intergenerational ties; and individual preference for a specified task or activity. Community building (39%) was highest rated in Cluster I as a value while Cluster II respondents most valued the individual acceptance (39%). The opportunity for an intergenerational experience was a first choice for 16% and 28% of the members in Cluster I and II, respectively. Single and married adults most appreciated the intergenerationality of the cluster and no sex differences were found. The specific preference for an activity (e.g., volleyball, singing, etc.) had a high value rating for 17% and 18% of respondents in Cluster I and II. Both youth and adults were represented in this category and an age preference for younger people was obtained with this variable ($P < .05$).

In the follow-up survey which was taken nine months after the end of Cluster I, the amount of family change in communication and lifestyle was not different from the outcome rating of Cluster I respondents which suggested that family interpersonal relationships were positively influenced from pre-clustering family dynamics. The perception of family change was significantly different from the pre-cluster rating of the family dynamics ($P < .05$).

In the follow-up of Cluster I for the perception of individual acceptance within the cluster experience the rating decreased from a peak experience to "enthusiastic" level ($\bar{X} = 12.5 \pm 1.3$, $P < .05$, Tukey's HSDT) from the individual acceptance perceived in the pre-cluster evaluation ($X = 9.0 \pm 3.2$).

Significant correlations included the following: liking one's family and style of family leadership (.52, $P < .05$); permeability among members of the cluster (group) and family dynamics (family) (.51, $P < .01$); liking one's family and family dynamics (.52, $P < .01$); family dynamics and permeability between the member of one's own family (.69, $P < .0005$); age of family unit and permeability within one's own family (.61, $P < .005$); and marital status and education (.33, $P < .05$).

DISCUSSION

High ratings of global satisfaction from the experience of family clustering seems remarkable across a time span of nine months. Several facets are suggested to be involved in the satisfaction. Both Clusters began with the participants having certain expectations. Cluster I members wanted to make more friends or to expand the dimensionality of interpersonal

relationships. Both Clusters had a large faction of members who wanted to have a specific time for family members to participate in a common activity and to experience family togetherness. In addition, relevant and significant issues were dealt with in the emergent collaborative design for the participating family units. For example, each family unit identified the supportive person in the family especially in situations of anger and family dispute; the identification of how the family members communicated to teach other; the self-disclosure of personal likes, dislikes, joys and sorrows that had not been revealed; the expression of religious values with family members and other Cluster members; and the identification of overt and some covert sanctions within family interactions and the Cluster interactions which fostered interpersonal understanding and trust. Favorable outcomes were predicted and were derived from the person's conceptualizations of perceived expectation that are generalized and specific in nature (Rotter, 1954). If the Cluster member or the family members perceive that the needs of that family unit are being met, the family (or person) will have high satisfaction with the clustering experience. The implication from this finding is that by establishing clear expectations for group membership and following through with consistent themes around these expectations, a high satisfaction will be perceived by the group membership.

It does seem remarkable that change in the persons and in the family unit would be perceived over a nine-month duration. Several facets are suggested to explain this finding. The Cluster members had a high level of motivation and commitment to voluntary membership and almost perfect attendance was noted for participants; the participants were willing to risk new tasks and a new group interaction; the desire of the family units to be

together and to enhance their family interactions. Stinnett and Sauer (1977) reported that in healthy families a "strong" family was willing to spend time together and to participate in activities as a group, the families were able to try new tasks, had a commitment to a religious life style and to a high degree of religious orientation.

In addition, Lewis et. al., (1976) reported that normal functioning families, which were familes within a church-sponsored subsample, had the following characteristics and which paralleled the present Cluster participants: human encounters are apt to be caring, encouraging, and reaching out to others in an affiliative global attitude; the value that respect is due others with an appreciation of others viewpoints; a high level of motivation in life; a perspective that living is complex and with constructive personal building in the ongoing activities of living; a spontaneity of people to react an affectually bond to others; an autonomy reflected in self-worth; genuine communications of thoughts and feelings to others; and a religious commitment to a life style which has a high value in the family belief system. Hence, the global ratings of these Clusters support the contention of Lewis et. al. (1976) that group relationships which foster strengths in family systems will be manifested in autonomy, dimensions of separateness or individually and connectedness or community. The high value of fellowship, sense of community, and high degree of satisfaction in participants demonstrated interpersonal effectiveness in clustering.

Another explanation of significant family change could be a social desirability factor. Friends of the Cluster leader may have tried to please the leader in filling out the evaluation questionnaire. The bias of the evaluator-author in formulating impressions of the cluster experiences may

also tend to positively affect the ratings. A Rosenthal effect of the experimenter is likely to positively influence the outcome ratings.

Responses by age revealed that youth were especially enthusiastic about the cluster experience. When considering that Cluster II consisted of forty members who were initially strangers and that over 20% were youth under 15 years of age, it appears dramatic that children had such a high level of satisfaction. One explanation might be that society has compartmentalized youth into its own peer groups with the consequence that youth are starved for adult interaction and acceptance. In the intergenerational cluster experience, such longings are fulfilled in a way that youth have not previously experienced. In addition, this may have been a first time to have youth-adult relationshps develop which took on the nurturing aspects of surrogate grandparents and/or surrogate parents. Regardless, the youth perceived a very high reward. Since the mobility of families not only isolate families of these clusters and also, of society in general, extended families and grandparent relationships are infrequent and contributes to the lack of adult interaction and acceptance as perceived by youth.

One group that is frequently left out of social group interactions in our society is the single-parent family unit. In Cluster II, the single parent units replied with "peak" ratings of the cluster and identified several needs that were met in a highly beneficial manner. Rewarding dimensions included the following: meeting of new friends in a non-threatening environment; opportunity to make friends of the opposite sex without the implication of erotic or marital consequences; the availability of role models for the absent parent; opportunity to see how other parents handle children and to learn new ways of relating to growing children and

their changing demands. The implication is that single-parent family units had needs met in a realistic and pragmatic way while concomitantly being provided with a sense of a supportive community. A non-threatening environment is provided by the family cluster and may be especially important for single parents who feel vulnerable to demands of others. It is noteworthy that single-parent status was derived by both death and divorce by members of the Cluster II.

In differentating responses by sex, the males in the middle years liked their families significantly more than other sex by age groupings. This observation supports the developmental task concept of the male at midlife as formulated by Levinson (.978) and Vaillant and McArthur (1972). In the cluster experiences, as suggested by other investigators, the married male turns toward his family as a source of high life satisfaction as compared to the men of younger years. The implication is that clustering provides a societal model to assist the middle-aged men in gaining life satisfaction as well as individual and family benefits. Hence, one would predict this subgroup to respond more positively to the cluster and experience.

The rank order of high satisfaction for the groups was personal, family and then intergenerational benefits. Though the family cluster was promoted to enrich integenerational ties in the clustering community and in the community in which the respondents lived, it is suggested that hidden agenda of individual gains and emotional needs are being met first and this permeated not only the cluster process, but also the type of activities selected to meet the participants expressed desires, the focus upon enriching and learning for individuals as novel types of human relationships were being

formulated. An explanation is that the aspect of intergenerational enrichment is likely relegated to a less valued benefit as needs were being met which had higher priority or were more overt. Time for reflection and processing of possible individual gains was inadequate in terms of what the intergenerational benefits were perceived by respondents.

Another explanation is that the family cluster experiences were teaching the family and the family member to improve self-concept. Sawin (1980, p. 127) suggested that families do not know how to teach other members how to improve the self concept and clustering provides a mechanism(s) for that enrichment of the person. From the open-ended responses, respondents gained individual awareness in being sensed as a whole person with worth and value; as a unique person with opportunities to express care and concern for others within their family or within the Cluster; as a person with many different feelings and different needs relative to their own family, yet feeling much more capable to contribute to their own family system to enhance the family togetherness; ability to do things together, and to communicate honestly and accurately to family members; to begin to understand strengths and hindrances for the family unit; and to examine the beliefs of the family that were apparent and some unsaid. An integrative explanation for these responses is that respondents experienced an improved self concept and family systems which functioned better.

Participants expressed a strong belief in common religious rituals and behaviors and attributed much of their satisfaction from these common bonds and values within the cluster. The expression of religious beliefs from modeling of others, especially the family of the minister of Cluster I, provided a unusual learning and demystifying experience for parishioners of

Cluster I. The large number of family members from ministeral vocations (N=14) in Cluster II but ecumenical viewpoints provided diversity in theological belief. This contributed to the implicit demand in group process to be accepting of others and their beliefs. Undoubtedly, the religious dimension was quite influential in the outcome of the clustering.

Impressions of the leader-author are that individual needs are met first to attain the growth necessary to subsequently value the intergenerational experience and to commit one's time and energy to such a social group. Once the individual and family unit perceives their needs are being met in some way, either overtly or covertly, increased motivation and commitment in terms of high attendance frequency will prevail. This encumbers the leader to accurately assess the needs of the cluster participants, to have evaluation time with each cluster meeting to interpret the process capacities, network dynamics, emotional concerns, and system structure of the group. One explanation for the high rankings of perceived satisfaction after the clustering and nine months later is that the collaborative type leadership was conducive to meeting individual needs as a first priority. The cluster activities were selected to facilitiate human understanding, to improve communication skills, to identify and conflict resolution skills, and to encourage the skills to be used at home between the cluster meetings. The behavior of the leader was interpreted to be extremely important for modeling the words and motivations of the cluster. Integrity, honesty, commitment to the group, ability to show creative, competency, and intimacy are viewed as highly facilitative to group formulation and constructive processing. The leader also needs to be aware of problematic situations and appropriately deal with the difficulties. One

leader (J.H.) took a youngster aside after the conflict resolution exercise in which the child was identified as the "person we get mad at the most", and had a discussion which reassured the child of his/her worth and importance in the family system. Sawin (1980) has suggested the leader need not be highly skilled. This author would suggest that the leader needs to possess skilled proficiencies in system processing, interpersonal relationship facilitation, and high sense of self-actualization in the collaborative type cluster in order to maximize benefits of the participants.

Since intergenerational experiences are viewed to provide pragmatic benefits for all ages, the benefits from intergenerational relationships will be especially accentuated when extended kinship families are geographically isolated from the family of creation and this begs the question: Do people in our communities feel uncomfortable in relating to different age groups and are unwilling to see intergenerational experiences as potentially beneficial? Are we creating a "generation gap" with our societal structures as youth and adult and elderly and youth and/or younger adults fail to have opportunities to interact in successful ways? Do we leave the middle-aged people to have responsibilities for the elderly, the adolescents or growing children in ways that are perceived as negative and burdensome, and hence attenuate the positive aspects of those relationships? An alternative to such uncomfortable feelings with people of various ages is the family cluster.

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